

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Initially, Applicant would like to express appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided.

Applicant also acknowledges with appreciation the indication that claims 12, 13 and 17 contain allowable subject on Page 5 of the Official Action.

Upon entry of the above amendments, claims 7, 9, 11-13 and 16 will have been amended, and new independent claims 18-20 will have been added. In this regard, claims 9, 11-13 and 16 will have been amended (where appropriate) for stylistic purposes and to conform to amendments made to the preceding claims from which certain claims depend. Thus, no estoppel should be deemed to apply to these claims. Claims 7-20 are currently pending. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the outstanding rejections, and allowance of all claims pending in the present Application.

Allowable Subject Matter

In regard to claims 12, 13 and 17 (which the Examiner has indicated as containing allowable subject matter), Applicant submits that these claims generally correspond to new independent claims 18-20, respectively. Applicant, submits that claims 18-20 include substantially all of the limitations of previously presented claims 12, 13 and 17, respectively, rewritten into independent form.

Further, Applicant submits that while claims 18-20 have been presented to include substantially all of the limitations of previously presented claims 12, 13 and 17, respectively; these claims are not identical since Applicant has changed the language, somewhat, solely for stylistic purposes. Accordingly, because claims 18-20 are not

identical to the previously presented claims 12, 13 and 17, i.e., rewritten into independent form; the Examiner is encouraged to review all claim amendments.

Thus, because the indicated allowable subject matter is recited in newly-presented independent claims 18-20, Applicant submits that these claims are in condition for allowance.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

In the Official Action, the Examiner rejected claims 7 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by PERRAULT et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,266,310);

the Examiner rejected claim 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by CUTSHALL et al. (U.S. Patent Pub. No. 2003/0115926); and

the Examiner rejected claims 9-11 and 14-16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over CUTSHALL in view of COSTABILE (U.S. Patent Application No. 5,640,873).

Without acquiescing to the propriety of the Examiner's above-noted rejections, Applicant has amended claim 7 solely in order to expedite prosecution of the present Application.

In particular, claim 7 sets forth a method of processing a product including, inter alia, separating a raw material for the product from a workpiece comprising the raw material by forming a slit in the workpiece while leaving a micro joint connection connecting the raw material and the workpiece, wherein the slit is defined by an outer periphery of the raw material and an inner periphery of the workpiece, and wherein the micro joint connection is positioned within the slit.

Applicant submits that PERRAULT, CUTSHALL and COSTABILE, alone or in any properly reasoned combination, lack any disclosure of at least the above-noted combination of features as recited in amended claim 7.

In setting forth the rejection which relies on PERRAULT as a basis, the Examiner asserts that PERRAULT discloses, inter alia, forming a slit in the workpiece 23 and dropping the product by separating a micro joint connection (*which connects the raw material and the work piece*)[see paragraph 1 on page 2 of the Official Action].

However, contrary to the Examiner's assertions, Applicant submits that the features of the presently claimed invention are very different from the purported method of PERRAULT. More specifically, Applicant submits that PERRAULT merely discloses a plurality of elongated slots defined between adjacent elongated strips 127 and 128, which are connected to the material 23 (*see* Figure 8 of PERRAULT).

Thus, Applicant submits that PERRAULT fails to disclose at least the presently claimed slit being defined by an outer periphery of the raw material and an inner periphery of the workpiece; much less, any feature which can reasonably be considered to be a micro joint connection positioned within the slit, as generally recited in amended claim 7.

In setting forth the rejection which relies on CUTSHALL as a basis, the Examiner asserts that CUTSHALL discloses, inter alia, forming a slit in the workpiece and dropping the product by separating a micro joint connection (*which connects the raw material and the work piece*). Initially, Applicant submits that the Examiner does not specifically identify which element is considered to be the workpiece and raw material. [see paragraph 2 on page 3 of the Official Action].

Nevertheless, contrary to the Examiner's assertions, Applicant submits that the features of the presently claimed invention are very different from the purported method of CUTSHALL. More specifically, similar to PERRAULT, Applicant submits that CUTSHALL merely discloses a plurality of generally parallel slots extending within a workpiece (*see* Figure 6 of CUTSHALL).

Thus, Applicant submits that CUTSHALL fails to disclose at least the presently claimed slit being defined by an outer periphery of the raw material and an inner periphery of the workpiece; much less, any feature which can reasonably be considered to be a micro joint connection positioned within the slit, as generally recited in amended claim 7.

Additionally, Applicant submits that COSTABILE does not provide any disclosure which can reasonably be considered to supply the above-noted deficiencies of CUTSHALL.

Accordingly, the rejections of claims 7-11 and 14-16 under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103 are improper and should be withdrawn.

In view of the amendments and arguments herein, Applicant submits that independent claims 7 and 18-20 are in condition for allowance. With regard to dependent claims 8-17, Applicant asserts that these claims are allowable on their own merit, as well as because they depend from independent claim 1, which Applicant has shown to be allowable.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that all of the claims in the present application are clearly patentable over the references cited by the Examiner, either alone or in combination, and an indication to such effect is respectfully requested, in due course.

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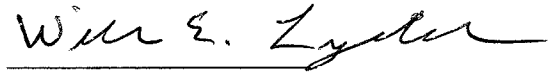
Applicant submits that the present application is in condition for allowance, and respectfully requests an indication to that effect. Applicant has argued the allowability of the claims and pointed out deficiencies of the applied references. Accordingly, reconsideration of the outstanding Official Action and allowance of the present application and all the claims therein are respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate.

Applicant submits the status of the present application as being after final rejection and with respect to such status believes that there is a clear basis for the entry of the present amendment consistent with 37 C.F.R. § 1.116. Applicant notes amendments after final are not entered as a matter of right; however, Applicant submits that the present amendment does not raise the question of new matter. Moreover, the present amendment clearly places the present application in condition for allowance.

Applicant notes that this amendment is being made to advance prosecution of the application to allowance and should not be considered as surrendering equivalents of the territory between the claims prior to the present amendment and the amended claims. Further, no acquiescence as to the propriety of the Examiner's rejection is made by the present amendment. All other amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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